SPIRE-EIT|2019

Summer Program for Interdisciplinary Research and Education – Emerging Interface Technologies (SPIRE-EIT)

Lara Chunko

Edit

From a Great Past to a Terrific Future

August 2, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊😳😍😮😢🙏(every emotion)

Woah. It's our last day. I'm not ready for these emotions. Since the symposium was yesterday, our projects have officially ended. It was awesome seeing everyone's hard work. I wasn't feeling the greatest (probably because I was nervous), but it was great to share our work with others.

This morning, we filled out an online survey about the program. We also had a post-program group interview regarding our time here.

We had a goodbye lunch today, and I cried. The room was packed with REU students, graduate mentors, professors, and staff. Farewell speeches were exchanged, and we even received gifts! Professor Gilbert gave each team something to remember our work by, and the 3D scanning team got hand held magnifiers. Karina also gave us luggage tags. For the 3D scanning team, one of our graduate mentors each gave us a book applicable to our interests! I got a book on robotics! Alex 3D-printed a cat with a ball for everyone.
One of the coolest gifts we got was a conditional acceptance to ISU's Human Computer Interaction graduate program. Given our hard work here, they are ready to accept us.
After the lunch, the 3D scanning team had our last group meeting. It was such a bittersweet goodbye. Although they are also our mentors, I consider them my friends too. They have been so kind and supportive this entire program, and we got to talk and laugh about so much more than research.

At the beginning of the program, we wrote letters about our values. Writing your values down is supposed to reinforce your commit to them. Reading my letter now, the values were reinforced. One of the most significant ones listed was communication and honesty, and I have multiple instances where I was honest and open about my thoughts and feelings.

Many thanks are in order for so many reasons. I won't list the reasons, but I want to recognize the people who have made this program amazing.
Thank you to the program coordinators and staff: Eliot, Stephen, Tiffany, Paul, Abby, and Andrew.
Thank you to all the teachers: Adam, Jack, Mindy, Holly, Kate, Alex, and Robert.
Thank you to my team professors and graduate mentors: Professor Li, Professor Qin, Yi, Vignesh, and Xiao.
Thank you to my team: Kelsey and Jennifer.
Thank you to all the REU students: Vrinda, Karina, Jennifer, Kelsey, Nina, Syema, Roselynn, Emmanuelle, Tiger, Bradon, and Lucas.

Thank you to everyone who read these posts and followed the mundane activities of my daily life these past two months. It's been a roller coaster of events and emotions, and I'm incredibly thankful and happy for the entire experience!

Tidbit(s) of information:

- If you're considering applying or committing to the program, it's worth it. There are so many opportunities to learn and grow professionally, academically, and personally. Take advantage of them!
- This is my 41st post. Given there were 70 days in the program, that's a lot of posting!
- I'm already missing all of you. Good luck everyone in all of your endeavors!

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Last Work Day

July 31, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

Since tomorrow is our symposium and Friday is wrap up meetings and a goodbye lunch, today was technically our last work day! That's kind of crazy.

Yesterday, I had a great time filming short clips of our team being productive. We'll be making a video to wrap up our work here, and Paul wanted some b-roll to include in our interviews. B-roll is sort of like filler so no one gets bored listening to you talk.
Jennifer and I shot a few silly ones, and I think I sent them to Paul on accident. We'll see what the end video looks like.
Kelsey shot an awesome time-lapse video of our walk from one lab to another. Our ten minute walk was shortened to thirty seconds!

Our last lunch and lecture was yesterday. Professor Birdie Shirtcliff started the lecture with a "Last Lecture" talk before switching topics and talking about her research. In her "Last Lecture" talk, she shared inspiration and encouragement for our futures. She said to be aware of limitations but to look closely about why they are limitations. When she started college, she had her whole career planned out. It didn't turn out that way at all. The detours we take in our lives shape who we are, and she's thankful she strayed from the straightforward path.
For her research, she's done amazing work delving into the complexities of biomarkers and their role in response to stress. She's also looked at biomarkers in response to environmental impacts. Research has been done to show that the response to stressful environments can be vastly different depending on how the body has learned to interpret it's surrounding. It was super interesting work, and you can tell she's very passionate about what she does. She was a great presenter. She taught with anecdotes and laughter. I really enjoyed her approach to presenting.

Yesterday, we finished our poster and it has been sent to the printer!

This morning, we had an HCI class, and it was super interesting. It was about thinking and decision making. People respond differently depending on their experiences and way of thinking. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, and that's super weird and interesting.

We put finishing touches on our paper and put it into APA format. We got a few revisions from our graduate mentor, Vignesh, but overall, he liked it! I'm really proud of our team for putting all of this together and doing such a good job!

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I hope all of my stuff fits in my suitcases. How did I acquire so much more here?
- We got our REU t-shirts yesterday! They look super awesome!

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

"This week is a mad dash" – Roselynn

July 29, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy), 😬(nervous)

Three days until the symposium!!! 😬(nervous) Our calendar looks really busy again.
As Roselynn puts it, we're all hard at work tying up loose ends. Today, 3D scanning finished our results and put graphics on our poster! We have a final poster, and it looks awesome. Jennifer has done an awesome job formatting everything.
We need to add a few finishing touches to our paper, and then we'll be done!

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Abby suggested we have a farewell dinner. Over the weekend, we went to Texas Roadhouse. It was very yummy, and I'm glad we got to go.
- Yesterday was my last Sunday here which also meant my last church service here. I'm really going to miss the family who drove me each week. They are so sweet and the kids are adorable.
- I'm super excited to see my family soon! 😄(excited)
- Is anyone going to post a heartfelt goodbye/wrap up blog post?

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Thursday July 25

July 25, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

I didn't post yesterday. There wasn't much to say. It seems like everyone is done with their work, so it's a different atmosphere at work.
I asked Jack to roast my resume which accidentally cascaded into everyone asking Jack to roast their resumes. I apologize, Jack. Thank you for all of your comments and edits. They were much needed.
In the evening, I focused on some work for school and got to talk with my family which was super fun.

This morning, I worked on our forensics project and a little bit of the poster. We need to have a finalized, printed poster by Tuesday.

Professor Peng Wei was our guest speaker for today's lunch and lecture, and I loved his presentation. His work was super interesting, and he is a great presenter. His work combines aerospace and artificial intelligence optimization. Aerospace is an interesting field, but I used to only think of big airline companies when I thought of aerospace. In reality, there are many more applications. Drones or urban air mobility is super interesting.

This program has given me great life advice. Anything I have a question about, there's someone here willing to talk about it.

Got a new programming challenge today. We'll see how it goes.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Word choice is really tough. Trying to figure out how to word my resume can be difficult.
- What's the difference between pjs and sweats?

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Tuesday July 23

July 23, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

Since we went to Minnesota yesterday, it was like we had a three day weekend. It was a nice break from work. We went to the University of Minnesota to meet other REU students and hear about their work. Some of them were working alone or only had one other partner. It was cool to see their work, and the campus is beautiful.
After our presentations, we got to go to Mall of America! I'm glad I didn't go with the intent of clothes shopping or I could've stayed forever. I went with the mindset to experience the place, and it was amazing. There are roller coasters, an aquarium, a Crayola store/experience where you can make your own crayons!, and so many stores and restaurants.

At work today, we had another manufacturing class with Xiao. We got to see a 3D concrete printer. We also talked about applications of 3D printing.

For lunch and lecture today, Professor Alex Braidwood came in. Online it says he's a graphic designer, and he didn't disappoint with his awesome designs and even audible designs where you listen to data. He's worked on so many cool and creative projects, and he works at the intersection of graphic design, HCI, and ecology/sustainability. It was definitely an interesting lecture, and I really enjoyed it.

This afternoon, we got to light paint! It's a really cool photography feature where you can paint with light. We start out in complete darkness and then used our smart phones to introduce light to the scene. The end result is really cool patterns and trails of light.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I love M&Ms, and a while back they came out with three experimental flavors (mint, coffee, and I think a raspberry or something). All three flavors were limited time items, but by voting, one flavor would get to stay. I actually voted a few times for mint, but I never heard anything about which flavor won. I hadn't been able to find any mint M&Ms since their initial experimental run, but at the Mall of America, I found mint M&Ms! They won!
- The power went out in all of Ames this weekend for an hour or so. It was a little weird not knowing what to do.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Friday July 19

July 19, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

The air conditioning is fixed!

Yesterday, I said I would finalize the presentation for today's group meeting, but it turns out I didn't have all the images I wanted to include. The presentation is finalized now though which is good.
Cropped some bullets this morning. Coding is fun.

The VR Lifeguarding team met again today. We'll begin writing our application for the conference soon!

Went back to coding this afternoon. The computer I'm using for coding is very slow, and when I run the statistical analysis code it takes two minutes. Slow and steady progress. I ran the statistical analysis on nine pairs of data today, and it took twenty minutes. At least I can feel productive while I sit on my phone.

Our schedule had an HCI class planned, but it was cancelled since Professor Gilbert is on vacation. Hopefully we'll reschedule the class.

Work smarter, not harder. I love the euphoria of solving a programming challenge. I cheered at work today for coding a four line solution to a twenty minute menial task. 😊(happy)

This afternoon, we had our group meeting…. Our presentation was roasted for so many reasons. We were not prepared for the barrage of questions. Comprehension questions, method questions, purpose questions, format questions, figure questions, trick questions! We know where we need to improve, and I'm glad we're doing this before the big day.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Some of the interns still like Uno! We're going to play tonight, and we'll change the rules so hopefully a single game won't take two hours. 😄(excited)
- Find a laugh throughout the day. Jennifer and I got a kick out of typos earlier today.
- The dining hall had mint chocolate chip ice cream today. So yummy!
- I won a Misty Robotics t-shirt through an easter egg in one of there emails. 😍(love)

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Work, where are you?

July 18, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🥵(hot)

Walked into work today, and it was a ghost town. It was also very muggy. We got to leave early yesterday afternoon since the air conditioning was turned off, but we figured it would get fixed by the time we came back the next day (today). … Turns out, there was a problem trying to turn it back on, and Howe Hall is a sauna. A sign on the door said faculty and staff were working remotely. This meant we all got to leave and find somewhere cooler to work. Jennifer and I went to the library and worked on preparing our resumes for applying to internships next summer.

We had our lunch and lecture in Elings Hall with Professor Jared Danielson. He was super friendly. He asked us about our research projects, and the lecture was much more of a discussion than a lecture. He shared some HCI research he had conducted such as screen capture lectures, computer versus paper testing, and even a tutorial for making a blood smear.

Since Howe Hall is too hot to get any work done, the 3D scanning team went home to work remotely. 😊(happy) I will finalize our presentation for tomorrow's group meeting (the same presentation will be used for the Minnesota presentation on Monday).

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I wasn't a 🍠(potato) yesterday. I worked on my resume and my website.
- Don't take air conditioning for granted.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 3 Replies Edit

I Forget What Day It Is

July 17, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

Time flies, but time can also feel slow. I tried to think of what day it is, because some of the other interns are talking about hanging out this weekend … and I forgot what day it is. (It's Wednesday)

This morning, our team worked on our paper and started our presentation for Friday. Instead of a single person presenting, we will all be presenting during our group meeting on Friday to get ready for the REU symposium. I'm really glad we're getting to practice before the big day.

This morning, it got really dark outside, and I heard it even started hailing! Crazy. When the rain let up, we left early for lunch in case it might start down pouring again. For lunch, I got to sit next to people I don't regularly get to talk with, and it was really fun!

This afternoon, our Unity Immersion deeper dive team had a surprise meeting. Jack brought us together to talk about the possibility of attending a conference with our VR project, and that's super exciting!!!

Later, some of the interns talked about schools and also research versus industry. It was really cool to hear different perspectives regarding work environment, work purpose, and learning versus applying knowledge. This program has me wondering what environment I will thrive in, and I really don't know yet.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Recently got introduced to boba. Love boba.
- Because the air conditioning is being shut off at 4:00pm, we get to leave early!! I wonder what I'll do with the extra hour at home. (probably be a 🍠(potato))

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Tuesday July 16

July 16, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

This morning, I thought we would be having a manufacturing course with Xiao. Instead, we rescheduled the class and went to scan some more data. We're almost done scanning data which is nice. We're going back to coding soon. 😊(happy)

Instead of a lecture during today's lunch and lecture period, we had a discussion about the book *Stand Out of Our Light* with Anna Slavina. We really only got to scratch the surface of the book within an hour, but it was still fun to discuss. There are many ways to interpret the book, and everyone brought differing perspectives to the table.

This afternoon, I helped visualize our bullet scans. They look very pretty. I also got to talk with Yi about Pearson's Correlation Coefficient. Go math.

During craft of research today, Abby gave us a method for critiquing papers. It's praise, question, then polish. It's a good method. This method should be applied to all critiques.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Who should be in charge of determining how algorithms decide what information to display to us? What does it mean for an algorithm to be good?
- We finished Season 3 of Stranger Things! 😮(speechless)

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Monday July 15

July 15, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

And we begin our eighth week.

This morning I met with Robert and talked to him about his experiences with graduate school. It's always great getting another perspective, but his perspective was definitely important because it wasn't a "life is perfect" story. His major advisor left in the middle of his PhD!

Our team also began working on our REU symposium application. It's due today! Last friday in our group meeting, we established we needed to write our REU paper on something other than our main research topic. This is because we want to get a peer reviewed paper out of our main research topic, so it doesn't make sense to cut it short for the REU paper. So, we're writing another paper.

This afternoon, some of the interns talked about internships and schools. It was a good conversation, and I really enjoyed the information everyone shared.

At 3:53pm, we submitted our REU symposium application! Before the deadline was moved to midnight tonight, the deadline had been 4:00pm, so I was a little stressed.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- There was cotton candy ice cream at lunch today.
- There's a new student in VRAC, and he apparently got fired from his internship because he broke his finger. Poor guy.
- Jennifer, Emmanuelle, and I are watching Stranger Things season 3. We're almost done, but wow so much has happened so far!
- My boyfriend and I watched The Prestige yesterday, and it was very interesting. With the main characters, as he says, "it's The Greatest Showman versus Batman" since it's Hugh Jackman and Christian Bale.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Friday July 12

July 12, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

This morning I submitted my questions to Abby for the discussion on Tuesday (July 16) on *Stand Out of Our Light*. I'm excited to discuss the book. It raises a lot of questions, and there are no concrete answers.

I also worked on the introduction of our paper. We need to include the history and former work, and it's hard to find the needle in the haystack that we need for the paper.

For lunch, Professor Gul K. Kremer took us out to eat at Cafe Beaudelaire! The place was so delicious. I had the border burger, and we got to order cheese cake for dessert! Aside from great food, we had even better company. Professor Kremer is so kind, and she has such an inspiring outlook on life and learning. She makes me feel that I can dream like a little kid as long as I am dedicated and unafraid to excel. She says "Life is too short to be shy". Reach out and take chances. The worst thing someone can say to you is no, and even then, there was nothing to lose.

I presented today. I was a little awkward and I got through all my slides faster than I thought, but I did it. I also didn't turn bright red and I was breathing continuously, so that's a plus.
After the meeting, we went upstairs to take a team photo. It was a hilarious time, because Xiao is very bad at taking photos. We had a lot we wanted to include in our photo, but very little space to include it all. Xiao at one point stood on a chair to get a better angle. The most funny part was the way he took photos though. He clicks the camera button at random intervals. He counts down way too fast (when he remembers to count down). He says "oh this is perfect" every time we rearrange something to redo the photo. At one point he said "Ready. Go.", but by the time he said "go", the phone was being handed back to Professor Li. Overall, it was a very entertaining time. I believe the picture will be posted on the 3DAOS lab website soon.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I'm still in the process of finding the right work-life balance for me, but I know I'll figure it out as long as I remember to relax.
- Nina introduced me to passion planner which is a site that has templates for bullet journaling! Thank you, Nina. I'm excited, because I love organizing my time.
- I had some great laughs today with fellow interns. 😊(happy)

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Thursday July 11

July 11, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

I finished creating my presentation for the 3D scanning group meeting tomorrow. I'm a little nervous about presenting, so we'll see how it goes.

For lunch and lecture today, Professor Jon Kelly came in to talk about distance perception. This is the way the human perceives how far away an object is. I had never heard of blind walking before, so that was definitely interesting. We also briefly touched the idea of sound perception, and sound is an even worse factor for trying to determining how far away something is.

We presented our projects from the Major Course Activity (MCA). There were three teams each with four people (3D Printing, Unity Immersion, and Unity Shaders). Everyone presented amazing projects. At the end, we each chose our favorites (we weren't allowed to vote for our own team), and congratulations to the 3D printing team!!!! 🎉(celebration) It was definitely hilarious to see their graduate mentor celebrate, since he's so monotone and straight-faced.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- After lunch, Lucas showed some of us his artwork, and it was super cool! He's really talented.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Wednesday July 10

July 10, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

Today was good. This morning, Kelsey and I went back to scanning. … There might have been an error with the software we used though, so we might be going back.

We had our last ethics class today. Robert talked about social media and the effects it's having on it's users. We also talked about confirmation bias and affirmation bias. I'm going to miss these classes, because it's not common for my major (in my experiences so far) to expose me to these view points. One of the most important takeaways from this program overall will be learning how to understand other people's perspectives and backgrounds.

For lunch, Professor Qin and his wife took me to a chinese restaurant! It was the same one I had gone to last Saturday. We ordered completely different dishes, and they were so delicious! I really enjoyed getting to know both of them. Professor Qin's wife is also a professor at ISU, and she works with food sciences. When we went to the food sciences department yesterday, we actually met Professor Qin's graduate student, and I didn't even know it. Small world. I feel very fortunate to have so many knowledgable people around me. I've learned so much.

This afternoon, I started diving into a bunch of research articles for our literature review. I also worked on my presentation for Friday some more. 😬(nervous) I think I've been procrastinating on filling in the slides with information, but I know I'll complete it when crunch time comes around.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I got boba today. 😊(happy) It's really fun to drink, because it's so different.
- I think I'm starting to feel sad about leaving. I know we still have three weeks left, but thinking about how fast time flew and how close we are to parting is making me sad.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 2 Replies Edit

Busy Days

July 9, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

This morning, the 3D scanning team had our industrial engineering class. This class was a lot of fun. We got to make micro pipettes! We took a tube and pulled it apart, and the diameter of the pipette is 10 micrometers! So small. Then, we watched a few videos about how water responds to different surface tensions. That was really cool and satisfying, because we watched the videos in slow motion. After that, we went to another lab to meet a food science researcher. She is working on 3D printing pills!

For craft of research, we walked around and studied former posters. We pinpointed the good and bad aspects of various posters. Choose very contrasting color scheme if choosing a non-white background. Utilize white space well but not overwhelmingly. Add descriptions for images. Less is more. Although fancy/complex designs may be visually appealing, it's can be very hard to follow or find information. We also talked about how to communicate with others while presenting a poster. Be ready to give someone a quick pitch, but also be ready to delve into very specific features of your work.

This afternoon, we didn't have our Major Course Activity presentation due to communication errors. Instead, it has been moved to Thursday. With our free time, we went to ISU's residential department to pick up campus money gift cards! These are condolence gift cards for the inconvenience of taking our washer and dryers out of our apartments. It's really nice of them to give us gift cards!

Another thing that's been on my mind recently is that I've been offered a resident advisor (RA) position at my university. I applied back in February, went through the interview process, and got wait listed. I got a call last week regarding an opening, and I'm pretty excited. I just received and accepted my formal job offer! 🎉(celebration)

Tidbit(s) of information:

- The material for 3D printed drugs is a squishy jelly, and then it dries out to become a hard pill. We got to see a 3D printed gummy bear pill.
- Another person did a PhD thesis defense today, and although I didn't see it, I got to see the person hear their response back from the board! It was so sweet! They came back, shook his hand, and said "Congratulations, Dr. …".
- My mom sent me a video of a baby elephant playing chase with birds, and it was adorable. I love little heart warming moments that make my day.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Wow, it's been a long time since I've posted

July 8, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(good), 😬(nervous)

We're beginning week seven today! We just finished a four day weekend, and it was much needed. I had a great time, and I got to relax.
On Thursday (4th of July), my boyfriend surprised me by coming up to Iowa!!! 😄(so happy) We went to downtown Ames where there was a pancake breakfast and a parade! Then, we went and saw Spider-man: Far From Home, went out for dinner, and watched fireworks.
On Friday, we went to Reiman Gardens! Currently, the theme is toys and games (next year it will be animal legos!), so we got to play checkers inside a rubik's cube, play giant chess, play connect four, and play an environmental awareness game. They even spray painted the grass, so you could play twister. The place was beautiful! Besides the themed exhibits, there's a butterfly garden and the world's largest (concrete) gnome. When we went, there were almost 700 butterflies. I highly recommend this place! In the evening, we went to Des Moines for dinner, and we saw more fireworks!
On Saturday, I went to VRAC to work. Afterward, Yi, Vignesh, Jennifer, Emmanuelle, and I went to a chinese restaurant for dinner. It was super yummy, and we talked for a really long time! It's so cool to learn about the variations in english such as Spanish english, Chinese english, and Indian english. We also talked about interview tips and those were super helpful! After dinner, I watched a documentary about Theranos (a company meant to revolutionize blood work) called The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley. It pertains to a massive product failure and unethical processes occurring behind closed doors. I watched it for the Ethics class we had today.
On Sunday, I went to church, and the family that drives me to church invited me to lunch! We went to a mexican restaurant, and it was delicious! The family has a little boy and baby girl, and they're absolutely adorable. Playing Peek-a-Boo with them is a lot of fun. When I returned home, I read, and I FaceTimed my family. It was great talking with them. I miss them a lot.
While this might seem like a busy weekend, it was super fun and relaxing. I got lots of hugs from my boyfriend, and I had great company every day.

And now it's Monday.
This morning started out with me writing part of our research paper. We went to Jamiahus Walton's PhD thesis defense today. That was nerve-wracking, and I was only a bystander. Watching someone present in front of a professional board determining if he deserves his degree is tough. I can only imagine how he felt. We didn't get to see the complete defense, because we had an Ethics class, but I hope he passed! For Ethics, we formally defined the definition of ethics with four principles.
This afternoon, I worked on the research paper and poster draft for tomorrow's craft of research class.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- At lunch today, I waited in line for 10 minutes for chicken (it was worth it, very yummy). A girl in line struck up a conversation with me and gave me a hug afterward!
- The 403 Forbidden error is fixed! I can now access the VRAC REU website from home now. 😊(happy)

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Happy Early 4th of July!

July 3, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😁(great)

Life isn't perfect; nothing is. However, with a good mindset, I can see everything will be okay. I've never talked to so many people about how I feel and think before now, and it turns out, I feel great because of it. Even though my life is one of the biggest roller coasters ever right now, I feel confident in knowing I will be okay.

This morning we had a class called Ethics. I wasn't sure what it was going to cover, and it turned out to be a great class. This class focused on ethics in a professional setting, especially regarding moral dilemmas and the subjective difficulty of defining what is morally right and wrong. Eliot also sat in on the class, and he brought up great questions to get us talking. I love and hate discussing moral dilemmas, because there is no solution. It's so easy to play devil's advocate for someone's idea, and the problems we're trying to address are so complex.

Karina and I got lunch early, because we were both hungry. Karina and I had a great conversation about political theory, history, and professionalism. I really enjoyed talking with her. She's so knowledgeable! Especially since she isn't a computer science major, it's exciting to understand her thought processes and perspectives. She's in a design major too which requires a whole different way of thinking about products, and it's really cool to learn and discuss differing perspectives.

After lunch, I got to meet with Professor Li one on one. We addressed my feelings regarding the shift in our project, and I understand why the shift was made. It was unexpected, but the reason it's occurring is because our team was doing so well with the work they've been giving us. It's fulfilling to know this change is because they believe in our ability to accomplish more. We also talked about life and education and stress. Professor Li is so nice, and I'm really glad I got to speak with him.

This afternoon, we had a human computer interaction class with Professor Gilbert. We talked about human error and how to give a talk.
For human error, it was really interesting to see the wide variety of ways to categorize human error when interacting with a product. One of the fun challenges we saw was the microwave race where different people try to complete the same task on different microwaves at the same time.
Professor Gilbert also gave us tips for giving a good talk. He gave a great idea of standing on a plastic bag if you fidget. I will definitely try that the next time I practice. We also did an activity where we put together a three minute talk in five minutes.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- This is a shoutout to Jack, because he wants one. Also, because Jack is super friendly, funny, and always willing to help.
- Chocolate milk is amazing.
- Everyone is so nice and supportive!

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

GenderMag UX Video

July 3, 2019 Lara Chunko

This post will not be a "Dear Diary" post, because this is not one of my usual posts. This is a homework assignment to watch and respond to a video about gender-inclusive software.

In our last human computer interaction class, Professor Gilbert introduced an app called SIGCHI. It's an app for easy access to conference schedules.

For our homework, we were asked to watch a video called Gender-Inclusive Software by Dr. Margaret Burnett. In it, she talks about GenderMag which is short for Gender Inclusiveness Magnifier. This magnifier brings to attention the gender bias "bugs" in products. The research she conducted with GenderMag found that more often than not (33% of the time), products were biased toward men.

With GenderMag, the goal is to recognize gender bias in order to be able to fix it. The cool way to fix gender bias is through, as she puts it, "talking about gender … by not talking about gender". Instead, consider a trait which all people have with varying degrees. For example, one of the traits she studied with GenderMag was computer self-efficacy or confidence when using technology. This is going to vary widely, and products need to be sensitive to these differences. In doing so, the product will be applicable to everyone.

This was a really cool talk, and it's crazy how much we don't know about technology. With the app I mentioned at the beginning, I wonder if it has gender bias.

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Tuesday July 2

July 2, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

Today was better. Life is getting back to normal, and I've got a lot to think about.

This morning the 3D scanning team had a class with Xiao Zhang. We're doing a crash course in industrial engineering, so today we talked about materials and even got to see a 3D metal printer! With regards to materials, we were introduced to various acids and flammable substances. We were also shown 200 proof alcohol.

For lunch and lecture, instead of a professor coming in, we had a graduate student Question and Answers panel. It was a really educational hour, because I didn't know what it took to get into graduate school. Before college, I had no idea graduate school required an adviser. We were given great tips on how to find an adviser, how to prepare for the GRE, and how to make the most of your time. It was also really interesting to hear the differences between undergraduate and graduate life.

Since I spent most of the meeting with Eliot and my team crying yesterday, I went in again today to actually talk about everything. It was an eyeopening talk. It's daunting to address my weaknesses, but it's encouraging to hear that everything will be okay. Coming away from the meeting, I know I have a lot to think about. I'm definitely nervous, but I hope my confidence can propel me to face these challenges head on. Eliot is super awesome, and he asks great questions. While I may not know how to answer the questions, being introduced to them is thought provoking and helpful.

We met with our graduate mentors to formally discuss writing our research paper today! 😃(exciting)

For our craft of research class, we discussed the discussion section of a research paper and also how to cite sources. While I know the discussion section feels like a long ways away for the team right now, it's exciting to talk about the implications our work can have in the field of forensics.

Oh yeah. I don't think I mentioned what our new project is. We are still comparing 3D point cloud data, except this time we are comparing bullets instead of 3D printed metal.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Communicating well is one of the toughest skills to learn.
- Stop and smell the roses.
- I have met so many amazing people throughout my time here. I want to thank everyone (and there's a lot of you) who has supported and listened to me these past five weeks. Thank you for helping me feel better, vent, understand life, talk about what matters.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

S.O.S. for the S.L.S. – except not really anymore

July 2, 2019 Lara Chunko

Disclaimer: This post is a day late. For some reason, I cannot access the VRAC REU 2019 website in the evenings due to a 403 Forbidden error. 😢(sad) I hope this gets resolved soon. In the meantime, here's my post for July 1st.

Dear Diary,

I feel: asdfghjkl (unknown)

I'd like to preface today's post by saying I'm okay. Everything will get better. It's just been a very interesting day, especially with the confusion of last Friday.
I'm not sure if I really want to delve into my emotions right now, so I'll give you the rundown of today.
Last friday, the 3D scanning team was given a curveball and a whole new project. We didn't really say anything, because we needed to process what was going on and if this was actually happening.
Over the weekend, Jennifer and I discussed our understanding of where we were going, but we really weren't sure.
This morning, Kelsey, Jennifer, and I decided to schedule a meeting with Yi to discuss the project. He clarified that we are taking the project in another direction.
With this concrete knowledge, none of us really knew what we wanted to do with it, but we knew we wanted to talk to someone about it.
Abby was really kind, and let us vent it out. We also emailed Stephen and Eliot to schedule a meeting time.
This afternoon, Kelsey and I stopped by Stephen's office to see if we could meet. He had about five minutes, and we tried to give him a quick rundown of what was going on. He said he wasn't worried about us, and that everything was going okay.
This wasn't what we were expecting, but we had another meeting to go to. We went to meet with Professor Gul K. Kremer. She's the Department Chair of the Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering Department. The meeting was scheduled for 2:00pm, but she was unavailable right away. In the meantime, Professor Qin was there and was talking to us about the project. He also gave us clarification about our project, and it was definitely a new understanding of how the work we've been doing ties into the new project we've been given.
We got to meet with Professor Gul K. Kremer at 3:00pm, and she's so sweet! Her passion for her job is evident in the way she talks about her work. She's got an amazing work ethic and mindset with everything she does. It was great getting to meet her, and she even invited us to lunch!
Now, it's almost 4:00pm, and we've got a meeting with Eliot about our feelings. This is where my emotions kind of bubble up and explode. After the initial rundown of our understanding of where the project is going, I kind of stopped talking. After Eliot began speaking, I started crying. This meeting was definitely an eye opener. It was an eye opener to my understanding of what research is, my feelings of failure, and optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints. It was a lot to take in and comprehend. Overall, I feel better. Whatever happens, I think I'm ready.
I'm at home now, and I just want to relax and let everything calm down. After the numerous emotions I went through today, I'm kind of emoted out.

This weekend was pretty awesome. On Saturday, we went to the Des Moines Art Festival. It's a massive art festival. I was only able to get through half of it in two hours! For lunch, we went to Zombie Burgers and I got Sarah's Revenge.
On Sunday, my friend stopped by! We went and got breakfast together to catch up. I also went to church and took a nap.
I also began reading *Stand Out of Our Light* by James Williams. The book is for the program, and it's about the attention economy.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- We went to a new dining place for lunch today. It's more modern looking, and they have ice cream! Today, they even had chocolate chip cookie dough! 😍(love)
- I'm a little upset that this post wasn't posted on the correct day. For some reason, I cannot access the website at home anymore. I hope this gets resolved soon, especially since I usually post at night.
- When walking back from lunch, Jennifer and I saw four chipmunks running around! So cute!
- Today's post title was originally created around noon, but later I added "– except not really anymore" after all of the conversations from the day.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Friday June 28

June 28, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good), 🤷(confused)

This morning I downloaded a bunch of animations for the VRAC Beach Patrol VR application … turns out I downloaded them in the wrong format. That was a little upsetting, but it's okay.

For lunch, the 3D scanning graduate mentors took us to a Chinese restaurant. It was yummy. 😊(happy)

This afternoon, we had an HCI class. Professor Gilbert shared an app called SIGCHI which informs it's audience on current conferences and the schedules for each one. We talked about the CHI (Computer Human Interaction) conference, and there are so many presentations!

Right after the HCI class, we talked about t-shirt designs for the program. I'm really excited about what our t-shirt will look like! I can't wait to share the final result with you!

As we went back to work, some of the faculty asked us if we wanted to get boba. We went to Tea Time, and it was super yummy.

The 3D scanning team had our group meeting, and Kelsey presented this week. Good job, Kelsey! She had a great flow from each topic to the next.
When I presented my weekly update slides, I mentioned I read about surface roughness, and then we got a pop quiz on what surface roughness is. There is always more to learn.
We also got a pop quiz on our coding abilities. Professor Qin says Google should be our first go to when we find a bug we are having issues with.
The reason I am confused is due to the direction our meeting seemed to steer toward. It seems like we are diverging from our original main goal to a new goal. We may begin scanning again?

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I somehow have two different Python versions installed on my computer, and I've tried installing NumPy on both versions and am still having some difficulties. I'm now looking into a solution with the help of Paul and Adam.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Thursday June 27

June 27, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

I spent this morning reading.

For lunch and lecture, we had guest speaker Professor Carmen Gomes come in. She gave a really cool presentation about nanotechnology for pathogen monitoring through biomimicry! That might not make sense, so what it means is really really small technology with inspiration from nature to determine whether or not a certain pathogen (for example, bacteria or a virus) is present. I looked up the size of a nanometer, and it's smaller than the micrometers I'm using with the 3D scanning team. 1000 nanometer = 1 micrometer. [1]
One of the research projects she shared with us has inspiration from the Hawaiian Bobtail Squid. It's super adorable. The reason the squid is inspiring is due to it's symbiotic relationship with a bacteria called Vibrio fishcheri which enables it to glow in the dark! [2] Since the squid wants to let a very specific bacteria in, how does it distinguish good versus bad bacteria? Professor Gomes is trying to mimic the way the squid selects only the Vibrio fishcheri so nanotechnology can specifically select a specific pathogen. It's really cool research!

This afternoon, I did some more reading and started working on my presentation for next week. I was supposed to present on July 5th, but since we're being given the day off, I get the choice to present on Wednesday (July 3rd) or Monday (July 8th). I'd like to have the four day weekend to relax, so I'm planning to present on the 3rd.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Last night, I took some time off. I watched some TV and did my laundry. That's it. That's all I did, and it was so nice.

[1] Micrometer to Nanometer Conversion: https://www.unitconverters.net/length/micrometer-to-nanometer.htm
[2] Hawaiian Bobtail Squid Symbiosis with Vibrio fischeri: https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/science_nation/glowingsquid.jsp

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Wednesday June 26

June 26, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 🙂(good)

We spent most of today with our respective deeper dive teams, because we began our Major Course Activity (MCA) today. The Unity Immersion team has decided to create a lifeguarding simulation. We're calling it VRAC Beach Patrol (VBP).

Later in the afternoon, the 3D scanning team talked about Matlab some more. We had run into an error where our pictures were not displaying … turns out the problem was our program was closing them out faster than we wanted. At least it was an easy fix.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I made a waffle today. Very yummy. 😊(happy)
- Professor Gilbert sent us a "lifehack for the day". It talks about productivity through organizing and delegating tasks.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

Busier Than I Thought

June 25, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😴(sleepy)

This morning I showed up at 8:15am. I put together questions for the Department Chair of the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering here at ISU. As I was looking up ISU faculty, I also Googled University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) faculty. There are so many professors working with robotics. I'm thinking about reaching out to some professors working in robotics labs I'm interested in. It's a dream come true to be attending a school so jam packed with knowledge.

Professor Stephen Gilbert came to speak with us for the lunch and lecture today! Although we already know who he is, we didn't know what he was working on or his background. He shared former research projects utilizing emerging technologies and future research projects he's interested in.
Professor Gilbert also shared his career path to where he is now. It seems that the place where people end up can never be predicted. He mentioned how people noticed him through his hard work and connections he had through others. He also kept his options open enabling him to go to Cyprus, start a company, and ultimately find the job he wanted.

This afternoon, the 3D scanning team worked on Matlab coding and the x3p file conversion implementation. The coding is going well, but we're having difficulties with the file conversion.

We had a Craft of Research class this afternoon, and Andrew taught us about good and bad graphics/figures. It's important that the visuals you include are easy to understand. He also discussed the importance of knowing your audience. For example, people looking to learn more versus clients looking to utilize your work. Being able to cater to both audiences well is definitely an important skill.

This evening we went on a hike at Ledges State Park. On the drive there, the surrounding area was … flat. We saw corn!!! 😊(happy) Mind you, it was very very short, but we still saw it! When we got there, there was a lake path or another steeper path. We ended up choosing the steeper path, and it was nice. It was interesting though, because the path wasn't just dirt. The path was made almost completely with wood. There were even wooden stairs! There was also a section where you crossed through a stream of water.
It was surprising to find elevation here in Iowa. My iPhone says I climbed 30 flights of stairs in an hour. This also probably means I went down a decent amount of stairs too. While the group was a little divided due to the rate at which some of us climbed, I really enjoyed the slower pace group (Emmanuelle, Jennifer, Bradon, and I). We got to talk and enjoy nature.
When we got back to the dorms, there were fireflies out and about in our courtyard area! They're really pretty. Lucas and Emmanuelle even caught a few for us to look at!

Tidbit(s) of information:

- Professor Gilbert mentioned one of the purposes of these blogs is to record the mundane, and it makes me feel better about my systematic "Hi. Today I did x, y, and z actions" posts. While I sometimes add thoughts and feelings, overall, having a record of what I did this summer will be fun to look back at. I've never had a progress record this detailed before.
- I'm confident taking the bus now! 😊(happy) I can now be lazy and take the bus to work everyday.
- Quick shoutout to my family: I love you, and I miss you.

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized 1 Reply Edit

Let's Get Some Work Done

June 24, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy)

I had a great weekend too! (see last Friday where I had a great day) Saturday was super chill for me, and I'm glad I got to relax. On Sunday, we had a busy day! I went to church and Walmart, then in the afternoon we celebrated Emanuelle's birthday! All the other interns made a group chat to plan a surprise celebration for him. We took him out to bowling and pizza. We went back to the guys' dorm, and Syema brought up a cake she had made. She even put the candles in an E! Then we all played giant Uno, and I learned how to play Smash!

For our morning deeper dive class, we were taught more of the hardware used in virtual reality (VR). We also got to play with the HTC Vive. It's really cool how many VR technologies they have here in VRAC. They even have multiple augmented reality (AR) headsets.
In our afternoon deeper dive class, we talked about the CAVE here in VRAC. It's called the C6, and it's a room made of screens. There's 96 graphics cards for the entire CAVE!
We also began brainstorming what we would like to create for the major course activity (MCA). The MCA is a project based on the knowledge we've learned from our respective deeper dive classes.

This afternoon, the 3D scanning team met with our graduate student mentors to talk about various topics. We covered classes we will be taking from Xiao Zhang, deepening our understanding of our research, x3p file conversion implementation issues, coding the alignment function in Matlab, American culture/social norms for addressing people, and we even scheduled a time for lunch this upcoming Friday. It's no wonder our one hour meeting turned into two! Overall, it was a good meeting, and I really like the graduate mentors. They're really nice and always supportive and willing to help us.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- I really enjoy card games, but I'm not sure anyone will ever want to play Uno again … the one game we played lasted forever. Did you know newer Uno versions have a "swap hands" card?! Say goodbye to your Uno.
- I was introduced to the game Smash, and it's hard. Emmanuelle's awesome at it though! I liked the R.O.B guy. He's a robot that swings his arms around.
- The program coordinators are giving us the Friday after July 4th off! 😊(happy) We get a four day weekend!

Sincerely,
Lara

Uncategorized Leave a reply Edit

I can wiggle my toes

June 21, 2019 Lara Chunko

Dear Diary,

I feel: 😊(happy), 🌧️(drenched)

I had a great day (besides being cold from the rain).

We began the morning with our first deeper dive meeting. It was more of a history lecture, which was okay, but it was a little hard to stay engaged at 9:00am.

At 11:30am, the 3D scanning team went to lunch with Professor Beiwen Li and graduate mentors Yi Zheng and Vignesh Suresh. It was great to sit down and get to know Professor Li (especially since he was in China (getting married! 🎉(celebration)) during the first week of this program).

This afternoon I got to walk and talk with Holly Baiotto. She's a current graduate student at Iowa State University, and she was also an REU intern in 2014! It was really nice to talk with her about her experiences with the program and see the similarities and differences with my experiences so far. I'm working on communicating with others, and she gave good advice of making smaller goals to accomplish speaking up.

We had our second deeper dive meeting, and this one was more hands on. We took the work we had made in our Maya and Unity classes, and guess what?! We turned it into a VR experience! 👌(so cool) 😍(love) I said Maya is only hindered by your own imagination, but my imagination is running wild with all the ideas of what I could make in VR. It's really cool to see your work in a game, but being able to be immersed in your work is a whole new level of excitement.

After the deeper dive meeting, the 3D scanning team had a group meeting. Jennifer gave her presentation today! Thank you for stepping up and going first, Jennifer. Professor Qin is also planning lunch with the Department Chair of the Department of Industrial and Manufacturing Systems Engineering.

At 5:00pm, I figured it was time to leave. We were done for the day. Kelsey asked when I wanted to work on some code for our research team. When I realized she meant either now or later (meaning we'd go to the apartments and then come back to VRAC), I committed to staying longer. It's too much travel time to go back to the apartments and then to Howe Hall and then back. So … we went to work.
There's a whiteboard in our lab area, and dang if our team didn't need it. I don't think we would've completed our code without drawing every idea out. I forgot how much I enjoyed working on challenging problems with others. Kelsey, Jennifer, and I argued back and forth, and I find it exhilarating to compare ideas and try to find the best solution.
The most satisfying moment though is when the code runs perfectly. Sure, there are multiple errors when you first compile, and weeding out each one can be tiring, but the end result is so worth the hard work. I'm so happy with the work we did this evening, but I'm also ready for some well earned rest.

Tidbit(s) of information:

- This morning it was really rainy. Thank you, Karina, for sharing your umbrella. 😊(happy) My shoes got really wet though, so my feet were pretty cold throughout the day (reasoning behind the title of today's post).
- During the walk with Holly, we saw two chipmunks out and about! Chipmunks are so small and cute.

Sincerely,
Lara

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